



*The Radio Amateur Society
of Australia*

QTC

January-February 2025

In This Issue:

Antennapalooza Success

We need more butchers

Do scare campaigns work?

<https://vkradioamateurs.org>



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Publication Information

Contact: info@vkradioamateurs.org
Website: <http://vkradioamateurs.org>

QTC is a publication of The Radio Amateur Society of Australia

ABN: 64 687 227 446 (RASA)

QTC is published monthly. If you would like to receive your copy you can either visit our web site to download or send us an email and we'll put you on our distribution list.

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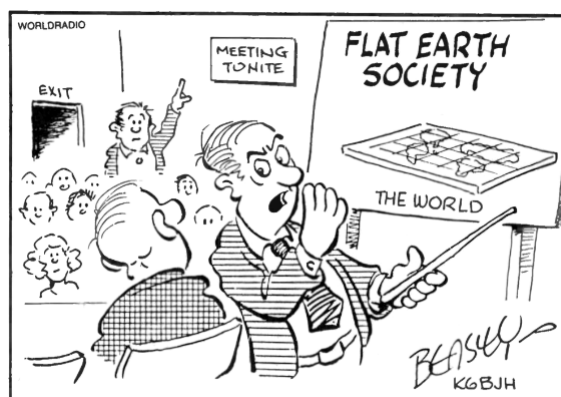
Cover picture credit:

Background image: 20M band Curtain Array used at Antennapalooza - see article Page 9 for details

Contributing Items For QTC Magazine

QTC Magazine welcomes contributions for future editions. When planning to submit an article, please read our submission guidelines first.

Following the guidelines will save you and the editing team a lot of time and effort. The guidelines are [HERE](#)



WE BETTER START KEEPING HAMS OUTTA HERE --- THIS GUY WANTS TO KNOW IF THE EARTH IS FLAT, WHY ISN'T EVERY RADIO TRANSMISSION LINE-OF-SIGHT?

From the President

The drums are beating?

A recent Amateur Radio news broadcast used a “Scare Campaign” in one of its segments.

22 Dec. In summary...

“There is no doubt one of the key messages in 2024 is we are (sic) under siege to maintain Amateur Radio spectrum. The drums are beating loud and maintaining spectrum will be a key focus in 2025 and beyond.



Our membership of the International Amateur Radio Union (IARU) will assist us as we take on this huge task of protecting spectrum, which is allocated to us.

Without spectrum, we will have no bands and therefore no hobby, so when you are a member of the WIA or you are thinking of joining, you are essentially contributing to a fighting fund, a fund which we take the fight up at all levels to advocate on our hobbies (sic) behalf.”

The news item does not detail which specific spectrum is endangered, nor any recent cases where spectrum has been defended against unnamed interests. What are these drums the WIA refers to? The previous issue of QTC magazine addressed the topic of the ACMA’s decision on unnecessarily depriving VK Amateurs access to the 60M band, demonstrating that even ITU and IARU decisions are not rubber stamped locally.

Let’s be realistic

A significant portion of the Australian population owns a smartphone or tablet that operates on mobile cellular network technology. As of 2023, Australia boasted nearly 39.6 million mobile connections, a figure that continues to rise. Users generally expect seamless connectivity and high-speed performance regardless of their location. The Internet of Things (IoT) is further expanding this connectivity, allowing individuals to link their home utilities and appliances. This technological advancement is largely influenced by global trends.

Spectrum represents a significant revenue stream for the ACMA, which generated \$1,321.4 million for the Australian government in the 2022–23 fiscal year. A large portion of this income is attributed to the growing demand for wireless connectivity.

Source [HERE](#)

Amateurs need to be aware that the radio spectrum is a finite resource, and it is probable that we will lose some allocations above 70cm, regardless of our wishes. It’s also worth noting that 70cm and above, our allocations are all Secondary; so we have no right of interference free utilisation of these bands. It would also be fair to say that our allocations are generous and under-utilised.

An effective strategy would be to promote the use of the spectrum we currently possess. Frequencies like HF, 6M, and 2M, are relatively secure. The development of 6G is on the horizon, and similar to 5G, it will rely more on the GHz spectrum for

shorter-range communication. We'll have to wait and see how it unfolds.

Don't get me wrong, it is essential to remain vigilant, as this approach is significantly more effective in safeguarding our assets than cultivating a sense of fear. But let's be honest, the IARU has not been able to assist the WIA or Australian amateurs with access to 60 metres, higher power, nor have they done anything to address the interference on 40 metres from SE Asia.

Keep in mind that Amateur Radio truly begins and ends with your involvement!

Antennapalooza

I feel quite disappointed that I was unable to attend and pleased that it was a great success. Antennapalooza stands out to me as the premier event in Australia with its unique blend of themed technical presentations, along with portable radio activities, and true camaraderie between clubs and individuals.

Well done to all who contributed and the hosts Ian VK3BUF and Di VK3JDI who make this possible. Check out the article featured in this edition of QTC.

73,

Paul VK2APA



Antenna Design: Supercomputers and paperclips

Among the new technologies to be tested aboard the ST5 spacecraft is an antenna that was designed by a computer running a simulation of Darwinian evolution.

Read more here: [Space Technology 5](#)

From the ARRL Website - DXCC Applications

Updated 14 January 2025

DXCC® application processing is back to typical processing times. In October, we reported that the ARRL DXCC® System had been returned to service following work that was completed to ensure the security and integrity of the system following the cyber-attack in May. Over 4,000 DXCC applications have been logged into the system for processing since returning the system to service.

We are currently processing applications submitted in December, and we continue to mail orders for paper DXCC certificates and endorsement stickers. There were 315 certificates mailed between December 27, 2024, and January 13, 2025.

This story will be updated with new developments.

NZ Regulator steps in to deal with non-compliant transmitters.

In rarely heard news these days, it's refreshing to read [this news](#) from our friends in ZL land.



Editorial

Welcome to 2025! A new year, and new opportunities.

This edition of QTC covers a broad range of topics, from policy through to practice. Chris VK3QB, provides some updates on the 40 metre Band Plan review championed by the WIA last year. For now, at least, it's business as usual, but as a result of the intervention and consultation, many morse code operators were able to have their voices heard.

All too often we hear people say "I'm not interested in politics". Is this a way of avoiding uncomfortable discussions and healthy debate, or a genuine disinterest in where our hobby is going? If you're a WIA member you should be taking an active interest; your association's membership continues to drop and its performance could be a whole lot better. The same goes for RASA members. Engage. Write to us. Discuss the issues at your local club.

We all need to take an interest in AR politics and the direction our hobby is taking.

On that topic, there's a thought-provoking article on our hobby and its future; where are we going? What image do we want our hobby to portray to the outside world? How do we grow our ranks? Where do we want amateur radio to be in five years? Ten years? We've picked up on a blog by well known DXer Nick Hacko, VK9DX and expanded on some of his personal observations.

Given there is no coherent, collaborative, or strategic leadership for our hobby, what can we do as individuals? We might suggest:

Join your local club and participate in club activities

Ensure all and any interactions with the public are positive and motivational

Try a new mode, start a new project;

share your results with others (we love hearing stories from readers too)

Where possible, act as a mentor to newer, less experienced amateurs

Talk to directors from both the WIA and RASA - share your ideas and engage with these national bodies

"Sell" our hobby at every opportunity

In the coming months we'll be creating some material to help clubs and amateurs promote our hobby to the broader community. If you work in marketing or have desktop publishing skills, we'd love to hear from you. Please send us an email.

In regulatory news, it's great that both RASA and the WIA are meeting with the ACMA to push for more power for Advanced operators. It's just a shame it can't be done collaboratively.

In his President's column, Paul VK2APA asks why the WIA is publishing alarmist news. Apparently the drums are beating loudly and our bands are under imminent threat. We'd like to see some examples so we can work collaboratively to fend off the intruders.

Maybe the WIA and IARU could start with the unlicensed intruders on 40 metres?

Chris VK3QB reports on various activities in the world of Morse Code. If you are trying to improve your code or want to learn more, consider joining his Zoom session on 17th February - details are in this edition of QTC.

And then there's our other usual columns. As always we hope you enjoy reading QTC, and we welcome your feedback.

73, Bob VK6POP and Chris VK3QB

Editorial & QTC Production Team

[info\(@\)vkradioamateurs.org](mailto:info(@)vkradioamateurs.org)



Recent Project - Allstar Node

By Paul VK2APA

Over the holiday break I decided that I needed to explore something different and ordered a DuraNode AllStar FM 70cm Node Hardware Kit from Glenn VK4NGA's business Multimode Digital Voice Systems. <https://vk4nga.com.au/>

What is AllStar?

Simply, it is a node based system of linking up repeaters and individual Amateurs. It's like Echolink supercharged and then some!

AllStarLink (AllStar) constitutes a network of amateur radio repeaters, remote base stations, and home nodes that are interconnected through Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP).

AllStar is a highly active network that enjoys global usage.

Node	Call	Description	Location
63298	VK2APA		Largs NSW Australia
1055	No-Info	Node not in database	-----
1999	No-Info	Node not in database	-----
20	No-Info	Node not in database	-----
43129	VK3RBP	439.700 91.5 Horsham	Australia
48798	VK4PK	Radioless Node	Brisbane
504545	VK4SED		Gold Coast/QLD/Australia
50522*	VK3RBA	HUB	Buninyong
510640	VK4PK	446.100	Portable
513020	VK3FTOM	439.150	88.5 Hz Mansfield
513024	VK3XEM	434.150 DuraNode	91.5 Hz Ringwood
521600	VK3RBA,VK3RMM	VK3RWU,VK3RBH,VK3RCU	Australia
521601	VK3AHY 145.200	91.5 Yarrawonga	Australia
521603	VK3KAS 439.100	118.8 Portland	Australia
521604	VK3WR	439.150 118.8 McCrae	Australia
521606	VK3RSW 438.600	91.5 Portland	Australia
521607	VK3AS 439.150	118.8 Daylesford	Australia
521609	VK3RJW 438.500	91.5 Werribee	Australia
52391	VK3DQS 439.125	439.125	Tatura,Australia.
526610	VK3MSG		Greensborough Victoria
527921	VK4KE		Brisbane
53930	VK3HJQ-ELBridge	ASL<>VK3HJQ-L 961564	Victoria Australia
545441	VK3VPN		VK44NET HUB-HoIP/HHAP
547450	VK4NGA	Radioless Node	Beerwah Australia
547452	VK4NGA	145.350 91.5 HP Node	Beerwah Australia
56263	VK3HDV	432.2000	Koraleigh
565700	VK3RSU	438.100 91.5 Mt View	Australia
570070	VK3ONE	438.5 Mhz	Naroghid, Victoria
58712	VK3BKO	441.250 DuraNode	Victoria, Australia
589545	VK4RJW	147.525	Norman Gardens Queensland
594540	VK3VSM	435.000	Shepparton
6030	No-Info	EchoLink	-----
6310	No-Info	EchoLink	-----
61148	VK4DU	433.0	Brisbane, Australia
62387	VK4GEO	441.000	Mount Isa, Qld, Australia
62561	VK4GEO	441.500	Mount Isa, Qld, Australia
62657	VK3GAZ		Wooragee Victoria Australia
28950	No-Info	EchoLink	-----
62998	VK3VBI	DuraNode 441.250	Corio Victoria
36220	No-Info	EchoLink	-----
User	VK4NGA	IaxRpt, Web Txcvr, or Phone Portal	-----

Above shows VK2APA and others connected to VK3RBA HUB Buninyong

Many older 2m/70cm FM repeaters across the globe are now connected to AllStar, enabling users with a node to access them. This is a fantastic way to refresh your club's repeater that hasn't seen much action lately. It stands to benefit non-AllStar users by boosting traffic from local and international sources, while also allowing access to local and global nets, groups and hubs. Hubs are somewhat similar to Talk Groups on DMR.

An AllStar RF Node, such as the DuraNode, resembles the conventional "hotspot" in that it operates on a Raspberry Pi with an RF hat and connects to the AllStarlink network through the internet. The primary distinction is that the Hat incorporates an analogue FM radio chip.

For further explanation on AllStar visit <https://www.allstarlink.org/>



All the parts ready to go - the complete kit which contains all the parts needed, excluding the Raspberry Pi 3B/3B+ or 4B single-board computer.

The Kit

Glenn VK4NGA has invested a lot of time and energy into the engineering and design of the AllStar Duranode HAT PCB, which he personally manufactures. You can buy a bare bones Duranode HAT, or a complete kit which contains all the parts needed, excluding the Raspberry Pi 3B/3B+ or 4B single-board computer. I elected to buy the complete kit.

The provided detailed instructions and videos simplify the process of assembling your own node, making it accessible even for someone new to AllStar and Raspberry Pi like myself. With a few quick edits to customize the node, I connected to my Internet, and I was on-air. I highly recommend watching the assembly video beforehand and keeping it available during the assembly process.

There is a requirement to solder two wires between the Pi and the Hat PCB. If you're comfortable with a soldering iron and have a fine-tipped, temperature-controlled one, this should be a breeze for you. If you're feeling uncertain, don't hesitate to ask a friend or reach out to your local club for assistance. Soldering is a valuable Amateur Radio skill, and this comic book guide is a fantastic way to get started.

https://mightyohm.com/files/soldercomic/FullSolderComic_EN.pdf

The case assembly is straight forward, again, all is covered in the video and instructions.

The end result is that the AllStar Duranode works exceedingly well and I have found it fun and useful for when my local repeaters are quiet, or catching up on the news and nets locally and overseas.

I have gained significant knowledge about Raspberry Pi, VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol), and AllStar during this journey and I'm looking forward to exploring further.

73

Paul VK2APA



The reviewer and RASA have not received any payment or compensation from the manufacturer or its affiliates for the creation of this review.

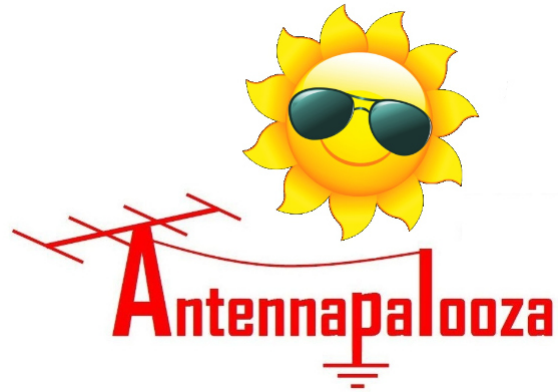


**The Radio Amateur Society
of Australia**

Antennapalooza - A Wrapup

by Ian Jackson, VK3BUF

Antennapalooza January 2025 is over. It was another great experience for Amateur Radio, but this year's event was not without challenges. Before diving into details we must first convey what Antennapalooza is all about.



The traditional Hamfest is a great way to catch up with friends and buy radio bits, but it's all over in just a few hours. Antennapalooza is different. Visitors take control of a green field and remain for a day or a whole weekend. Guests can set up antennas, tents, caravans, or swags and experience so much more.



A pavilion is erected where guest speakers can talk about tech topics that take advantage of the extra space. Visitors bring along folding chairs and refreshments of their choice. Antennapalooza is a cost free event and no bookings are required. Free tea, coffee, and barbecue facilities are available.

Antennapalooza is funded entirely by donations from supporting clubs and groups. It takes place at Drouin West to the East of Melbourne every 12 to 18 months. Supporting groups this year include clubs GGREC, FAMPARC, SPARC, EMDRC, Pride Radio Group, and RASA.

Antennapalooza usually has a theme. In 2016 we experimented with a demonstration Rhombic antenna on 40 metres, which took up a couple of acres. There have been other antennas since then. For 2024 it was to be a Curtain Array on 20 metres. Popular for commercial HF installations, these antennas are huge and don't fit in the average backyard.

Antennapalooza had been scheduled to commence on the 30th of November last year and all was looking good. The grass was cut, the cows evicted, and the new demo antenna was up and working. The new club event callsign of VK3AZA had been approved by the ACMA. Unfortunately, two days before launch the weather forecast for the weekend included 40mm of rain and high winds. These were less than ideal conditions for a field event involving tents, antennas and folding chairs. With regret, emails were dispatched and the event was deferred until the 11th and 12th of January.



Although this was entirely necessary, this postponement created some logistical difficulties. The Curtain Array antenna was built from two plastic poles, 18 metres high, spaced 60 metres apart, with 350 metres of wire and rope suspended between them. It was planned to be operational for around two weeks only. Now it had to survive 2 months of hot weather and high winds from multiple storms. This was tough for an antenna made from 90mm plastic pipe, with the structural integrity of guyed pasta.

A week before the new start date a gust of around 90 kph dropped one of the 18 metre masts. The smashed pole was cut, glued and stood back up again, except it was now 400 mm shorter. The design and construction of the curtain array will be the topic of a separate article and video, but essentially it was a 60 metre wide collection of 8 phased horizontal folded dipoles on the 20 metre band, with 8 matching reflector elements.

Antennapalooza – rescheduled for 2025 was the ninth event of its kind. The Saturday was hot at around 33 degrees. Regardless, attendances were excellent and around 60 guests



found a spot under the cover of the pavilion. There were presentations on Butternut HF antennas, the SA Tiny Ultra pocket analyser, a radio balloon launch project by the Scout Association and an introduction to the new *This Is Amateur Radio* website by RASA. (see upcoming March QTC for detail about this topic). Presentations were aided by a 100 inch TV wall for slides and supporting images.

True to form, another storm front came through late Saturday and dumped 20mm of rain on the pavilion over a brief 30 minute interlude. Just as sudden, the weather was fine again and



guests retired to a pleasant evening by the campfire pit. Orders for 20 Pizzas were issued for those who did not care to cook that night.

Sunday morning started off well. The opening presentation was about the Starlink mobile internet system. Next up was a presentation on the Curtain Array antenna, detailing design choices and its construction process. This talk was supplemented by a walk to the antenna site for a closer inspection.

The original plan was to leave the demonstration antenna up for a couple of extra weeks for further performance testing, but unfortunately our summer climate had other ideas. Still, its short-lived construction had been worthwhile. The phasing and matching arrangement worked and the SWR was low. A 3 x 3 popup gazebo was assembled at the feedpoint as a 'shack' with an FT950 transceiver and power supply on a plastic table. While initially quiet, 20 metres warmed up and later in the evening there was a decent opening to Europe in progress. There were other contacts to VK5, VK6 and ZL. On Sunday morning more contacts were made to Wales and the USA. It was great to see the antenna in action.

By early afternoon eyes were on the weather radar, which revealed a fresh storm front working its way across the state. It looked big. A decision was made to empty out and drop the pavilion to the ground before it hit. Plenty of volunteers were on hand and the site was secured minutes before the leading edge of the storm arrived. This was a nasty one and it attacked one of the poles, unceremoniously bringing it and half of the curtain array to the ground. One less thing to worry about...



The real success of Antennapalooza is the excellent interaction between visitors, spread over a full weekend. There's plenty of time for conversation, construction, and a little experimentation. Many ideas were shared, faces put to names previously only encountered on the air, all in a relaxed setting.

Despite the challenging weather, around 75 people attended, being the biggest turnout for the event so far. There was some free-form speculation as to what type of antenna could be used for future Antennapalooza events. Giant Horizontal magnetic loops? Vertical longwire antennas held aloft by tethered drones? Fertile imaginations were at work, but nothing was confirmed.

In the days following the rest of the antenna was dismantled. 1,200 metres of rope was rolled up into little bundles awaiting a future adventure. Hopefully this will take place in the first quarter of 2026.

Peter VK3DEL put together a nice video with his drone. It really demonstrates the magnitude of the Curtain Array antenna.

[2025 Antennapalooza Event Curtain Array](#)

Check this site for details on what comes next. www.antennapalooza.net.au

Acknowledgements

Any event is only as good as those who come together to make it happen. This one took a little more work than most. Many thanks to Jim VK3UFO, David VK3XMF, Andy VK4KCS for their prep and post cleanup activity. Dianne VK3JDI expended significant effort in the boom lift, standing up and taking down the pavilion and in the creation of truly memorable lemon slices. Thanks also go to Michaela, Geordie and the Pride Radio Group team for keeping us dry from the Saturday afternoon water dump with their seemingly unlimited supply of orange conduit.

Amateur Radio Operators Detect Signals from Voyager 1

At the time of its construction in the 1950s, the Dwingeloo Radio Observatory was the largest rotatable telescope in the world with a dish diameter of 25 meters. It was quickly overtaken in the rankings but was used by astronomers for decades until it slowly fell into disuse in the early 2000s. After a restoration project the telescope is now a national heritage site in the Netherlands where it is also available for use by radio amateurs.

Recently [this group](#) was able to receive signals from Voyager 1.

Boat Anchors

There seems to be somewhat of a renaissance of older gear. Maybe this is nothing new, but Facebook seems to have a resurgence of people taking an interest in older classic radios.



A new Facebook group recently appeared, dedicated to boat anchors and those interested in these older radios. If you're a Facebook user search for "VK Boat Anchor Vintage Ham Radio" and click the join/follow button. Andrew (Andy) Willis VK5LA is the moderator and is very responsive to requests.

Quite a few Boat Anchor nets have also cropped up - some have been around for a while, and some are a little more recent. If you have an older radio, or an interest, feel welcome to check-in.

Boat Anchor Nets in VK.

- 80 Metres - Hosted by Dean, VK5LB on 3620 kHz every Tuesday evening at 09:30 UTC
- 40 Metres - SSB Boat Anchor Net - Hosted by Peter, VK3ATC on 7240 kHz LSB Sundays at 06:00 UTC
- 80 Metres Bottleshop Net - Friday Nights 3590 kHz 09:30 UTC
- 40 Metres All VK Boat Anchor AM Net - Wednesday Mornings 7125 kHz AM 22:00 UTC
- 40 Metres All VK Boat Anchor AM Net - Saturday Mornings 7125 kHz AM 22:00 UTC



Fire up your older radio gear and call in.



Possibly the most well known classics are Yaesu and Kenwood radios including:

- Kenwood TS-520 (1977)
- Kenwood TS-830 (1980) and offering the WARC bands
- Yaesu FT-101 series (1975) with the FT-101E perhaps being the most popular
- Yaesu FT-200 (1969)
- Yaesu FT-201 (1973)
- Yaesu FTdx-560 (1969)
- Uniden 2020 (1975)

Why do we bother with older gear? They need nurturing, tuning, reconditioning, repairing, and manual tweaking. Locating spare parts can often require either the skills of a detective,



or plain old-fashioned good luck. The older gear doesn't have DSP filtering, or spectrum scopes, or built in Antenna Tunings Units.

I guess the interest is very similar to vintage car enthusiasts. The ability to care for, and restore these old radios is reward enough.

A number of photos from VK operators are included in this article - as much for reference and nostalgic purposes as anything.

In addition we have two short stories from the field. We hope that readers can help by submitting similar stories to keep this column alive.

Fond memories, repair & maintenance - a work in progress

By Chris VK3QB

Earlier this year I bought a Kenwood TS-830S. I fondly recall using radios of this ilk in my novice days (a FT-101E) in the 1980s, but had never owned a Kenwood.

Anyhow, I got it home and had a few good hours of operation when an intermittent fault in the transmitter raised its ugly head. The transmitter quickly became more and more intermittent; it was either transmitting the full 100W, or nothing, nada, zero. The time had come to do some fault finding; and I

suppose deep down, this was one reason I bought the radio. The average amateur can still take the covers off and realistically undertake fault finding and rectification.



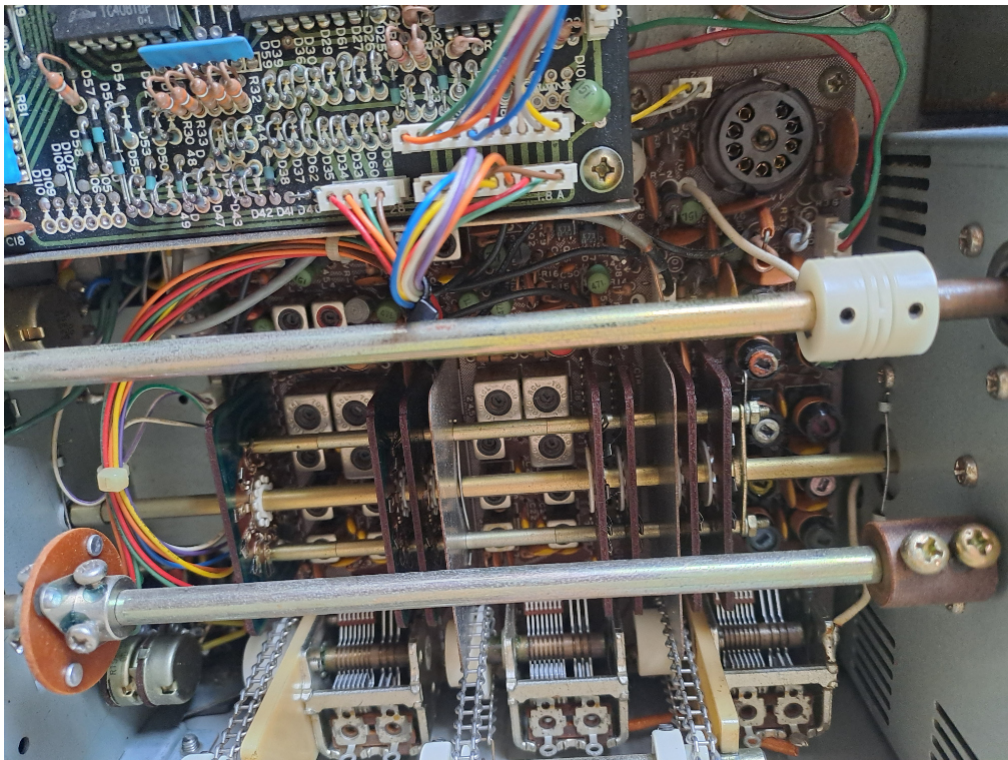
IMPORTANT NOTE: Beware of the high voltages in the PA stage of many of these older valve radios. 900V. It can kill. Do not take the covers off if you aren't confident; and even if you are, be especially careful.

Of course, a lot of people also enjoy reconditioning these older radios too, which is a large part of the hobby for some amateurs. There's also something about these older radios that

many of us like using; whether it's the honest audio from an analogue receiver, or the need to tune the radio when changing bands.

With the help of some very generous amateurs and of course my favourite search engine I was able to work through some basic diagnostics with guidance from Phil VK3VB.

After about 30 minutes the problem was narrowed down to the 12BY7 Driver socket. Notes on forums and emails confirmed the likely suspect being a dry joint on the valve socket. Normally this wouldn't be a huge problem to confirm and resolve. The challenge with the TS-830S, as opposed to the TS-520 series, is that the RF Board needs to be removed to inspect the underside of the board. As you can see from the photo below, there is a fair bit of hardware in the way. The RF Board contains a whole bunch of components and connectors to control shafts, as well as shafts passing overhead to the PA Unit.



A post to the Kenwood Hybrid Facebook group resulted in an interaction with a friendly American who kindly sent me a document which described the procedure to remove the RF Board; this document was written by another amateur as a part of a larger repair and reconditioning reference. Since then I've had other friendly amateurs reach out with thoughts, ideas and I now have a good armoury of Kenwood Hybrid service and repair reference documents, as well as some helpful YouTube videos.

I think (hope?) with a little care and patience, and a load of photos and notes as I go, I'll have a good chance of removing the RF Board, confirming the fault and rectifying the dry joint/s. And then, of course, putting it all back together.

I think I might lure Phil VK3VB over with a bottle or red or something; having someone with more experience looking over my shoulder is a good thing.

I'll report back on progress in a future edition of QTC.

Urges, a reconditioning project

By Phil VK3VB

Early in November 2024 I had a sudden urge to get a “boat anchor” back in the shack. Being kind of impulsive and not the most patient person, I was pleased to see a Yaesu FT200 for sale a few kilometres from home. Having used an FT200 back in my misspent youth, it was soon purchased and proudly on the bench.

The sale included the FT200, power supply, and 6m transverter.

A bit of a test showed that we had both transmit and receive, even if not at full power. There is still much work to be done, but I started with cleaning the valves, sockets, pots etc. The VOX / break-in was not working, and this proved to be the main relay which needed cleaning and also had a bent contact. After a bit of attention, that is working perfectly now.

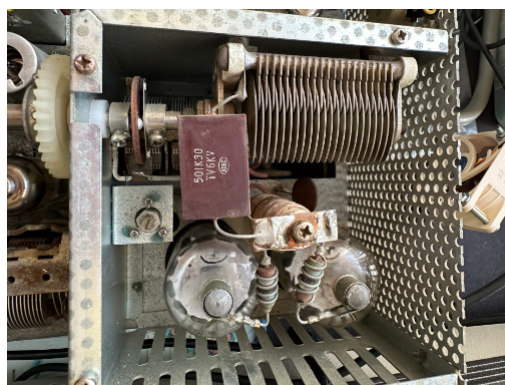


On the to-do list I have a replacement pair of finals (6JS6) next to the radio and ready to be installed, along with a replacement for an oil capacitor (looks very similar to electrolytic), which looks as if it is leaking. A new driver is on order, along with a Vacuum Tube Volt meter to help with measurements. I will also change all electrolytics in the radio over time.

I have had several enjoyable QSOs using the radio, mostly on CW, and have also checked in to the Sunday boat anchor net on 40m SSB. I used a Marconi test set to do a quick and dirty tune up on 40m, and get between 50 and 80W output (it does tend to drop off the longer I transmit).



I am really looking forward to working through this one and getting it working as close to the original specifications as possible. Then it will be time to look at the transverter!



We need more butchers - Opinion piece

Back in September 2024, well known DXer and Amateur Radio retailer Nick Hacko, VK9DX published what some may consider a controversial article on his blog. If you didn't read it, or need a refresher, here it is:

We need more butchers.

As well as painters, doctors, architects, accountants, bus drivers, shopkeepers and housewives. Sportsmen, hunters, adventurers, extroverts and dreamers.

Or we will perish.

We don't need any more engineers and career bureaucrats. And especially not any more self centred introverts. The reason why ham radio is dying in Australia is obvious: over many decades, we have created a comfy club for the least progressive and least competitive introverts. Overly technically minded experts who've spent their careers in a risk free, cushy environment. People who have turned the highly competitive sport of ham radio into a hobby with no real purpose.



I am flicking through the pages of AR magazine, the flagship publication of our organisation. Club politics by bureaucracy, followed by ten pages of engineering a home built project that no one is going to build. A self congratulatory article by a competent and experienced engineer, but boring to death. Followed by another, even dryer post-graduate-level analysis of a bandpass filter. More club news – old people reminiscing about something I couldn't care less about. Finally, the last couple of pages listing contest results.

But no photos of radios or antenna setups, no personal stories, literally just copy and paste from an Excel sheet. Of course I still read the magazine from cover to cover because I am an addict, but there is more action and more excitement in the Watchtower doomsday Christmas issue than in AR.

We teach newcomers the basics of communication theory, and make them aware of rules and regulations. They pass the exam, get the callsign – and that's it. We left them wondering what the hell is the next step? Surely not a bogan mundane conversation on 40m band? Endless talk about modulation? AR magazine in the mail? A club meeting where the only attendees are hams who made their last dx contact in 1982? Where is the action? Where is the sophistication? Where is the excitement?

Did you know that chess is not just growing fast, but there are more and more kids, teenagers and young adults taking it up seriously? Thanks to the

internet, it is one of the most popularised games in modern history. Why? Because it offers instant gratification, the satisfaction of winning, and opportunities to learn. The grand masters are featured like true celebrities, every boy wants to be Magnus Carlsen, and every girl wants to be that smart princess from Queen's Gambit. An old game previously reserved for introverted nerds, reinvented, publicised, sold, and embraced by the next generation of extroverted, smart kids.

Or clay target shooting – another growing hobby where everyone regardless of age or education is welcome. Highly addictive for a reason. Every shooting day is a competition, an attempt to better oneself. No idle and boring talks about rifles, or weather, or politics. Just hit the target, and hit it with a smile. Hunt and destroy.

Amateur radio is long overdue for a complete overhaul. It has to be reclaimed by smart extroverts, popularised by vocal ambassadors, repackaged and sold as a sport. A highly competitive sport played by sophisticated players. Because – that is what it is.

Ref: [We need more butchers – DXing](#)

Nick is a passionate and active amateur. We don't have to agree with all of his views, but he does raise some interesting points worthy of discussion.

Nick suggests the hobby is dying in Australia.

This is a hard claim to substantiate, but if we look at the numbers and general activity on the bands, it's not a healthy story. And it will become harder to know the number of licenced amateurs as we have now moved to a class licence. Anecdotally, it is probably fair to postulate that activity is declining; certainly in non-digital modes. A quick inspection on the FT8 frequencies most days reveals the ever familiar squealing and squawking.

The single exception are contest weekends when our bands light up locally with avid contesters putting their stations and skills to the test. But this can't be more than a few hundred VK amateurs at best. If we look at the Remembrance Day contest the trend is heading in the wrong direction.

2024 - 195 logs

2023 - 237 logs

2022 - 262 logs

2021 - 310 logs

Those of us who have been in the hobby for at least 30 years will attest to a general decline in domestic SSB and CW activity on 80 and 40 metres most week-nights. Analogue repeaters (especially outside capital cities) spend most of their time idle. How much of this is due to the dilution resulting from the many UHF digital networks that vie for our attention?

Of course, Amateur Radio is about so much more than contesting; but that cohort is probably the loudest. We could fill many pages with all the facets that make up our



hobby: kit construction, antennas, awards, portable ops, satellite and EME, morse code, digital modes, propagation, DXing, QRP, tinkering with tech, hi-fi AM, programming, reconditioning boat anchors, VHF, UHF, SHF, VLF... the list goes on....

Nick makes some arguably reasonable observations about Amateur Radio magazine, which probably apply more broadly to the image portrayed by our hobby; both internally and externally. Where are the welcoming, motivating stories and accompanying photos? Where are the press articles in the broader community? We can't place the blame directly on the WIA or the Editor; the magazine (just like QTC) depends on quality articles from contributors.

We are all responsible for the internal and public image of our hobby. From our national representative bodies, to the clubs, to each of us as individuals.

Nick observes that there are "no photos of radios or antenna setups, no personal stories". It's a fair call. We all have an obligation to make our hobby exciting and interesting. You've heard the expression "enthusiasm breeds enthusiasm". Our websites, magazines, newsletters and PR material must motivate the reader. If we want to attract new people to our hobby and encourage the incumbents to be more active, we must present a motivating and attractive proposition.

So many of us are passionate about our wonderful hobby; but only privately or with a few mates at the local club. Nick's right. Amateur Radio in Australia needs an overhaul. Where is the sector leadership? Where is the strategy? It's easy for us at QTC to be critical because we're on the inside and we've tried.

The WIA is doing very little, if anything, to develop a strategy and demonstrate leadership for the hobby of Amateur Radio in Australia. RASA is the new kid on the block, and most certainly the underdog. RASA wrote a Strategy Paper in late 2021. It was published and also shared with the WIA.

No responses. Not even an acknowledgement. Their collective disinterest in the hobby, disregard (or hatred?) for RASA was a greater motivation than working collaboratively for the good of our hobby. What does that tell you?

If you're a member of the WIA you might not like this rather unpalatable fact. The WIA has no strategy, no public relations plan, and no vision for where our hobby will be in the years and decades ahead. They even discourage their club liaison officer from communicating with clubs. When was the last time you saw a WIA table at a Hamfest? When was the last time a WIA Director visited your club?

Don't believe us? Check the WIA website. Read through AR Magazine back-issues. Ask a board member. Email the President.

There are a few passionate YouTubers out there; and whilst they might profess a desire to improve the hobby, ultimately they are motivated by clicks, likes, and anything that brings advertising and revenue to their sites. Or maybe they donate the revenue to growing the hobby?

Nick's right. "Amateur radio is long overdue for a complete overhaul. It has to be reclaimed by smart extroverts, popularised by vocal ambassadors, repackaged and sold..."

Neither Nick, RASA nor the clubs can do this alone. We need cohesive, positive leadership from the top.

Image Designed by macrovector / Freepik



RASA DX Contest

By Chris VK3QB

It's that time of year. Due to personal commitments the RASA DX Contest 2024 results are delayed; I'll get them finalised and published in the next two weeks.

RASA DX Contest 2025

This year the format will be as simple as it gets. This benefits contestants and the organiser.



Objective

The objective of this contest is to encourage greater participation and activity on the MF, HF and 6 metre bands. The contest is deliberately designed as a long form event, as many amateurs are unavailable for the more traditional contests held on weekends.

It also provides the opportunity for those who like to operate in a more relaxed fashion to still take part in a national contest. This also allows amateurs the opportunity to use their 2×1 Contest Callsigns, a great way to attract the interest of international stations.

Bands: 160m through 6m, no WARC

Categories: – best score – slots (per Club Log)

First Prize for the winner of each category (a Plaque)

Digital

CW

SSB

Open – all modes

One point per slot. A slot is a QSO on a band/mode.

ClubLog for scoring:

All participants must be members of RASA and must upload their logs to Clublog. Once you have an account with Clublog you can click on the Settings menu item and from there add clubs: choose RASA from the pulldown menu; your application will be sent to RASA administration for approval. If you need assistance send us an email.

Participation Award:

As per previous years, RASA encourages people to have a go. So long as you meet the minimum entry criteria, you will go into the draw for some great Participation



Prizes.

Last year we had a Rig Expert Antenna Analyser valued at \$350

This year it's a Zachtech WSPR Tx valued at \$230

PARTICIPATION Thresholds & Prizes:

All QSOs from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025. To be eligible for participation prizes you must meet the minimum QSO and DXCC criteria.

CW Minimum Threshold: A minimum of 200 QSOs and a minimum of 25 DXCC.

Digital Minimum Threshold: 500 QSOs and a minimum of 50 DXCC.

SSB Minimum Threshold: 300 QSOs and a minimum of 25 DXCC.

Mixed Minimum Threshold: 400 QSOs and 50 DXCC - this will be for the more casual ops who like multi-mode operation.

These criteria apply for entry to the event, inclusion in the draw for the participation prizes and First Place Plaques.

Participation Prizes:

Major prize available to all participants - to be advised

Morse Paddle for CW Category – valued at \$350

Prize Plaques:

There will be plaques for the winner of each category.

Please direct any queries to Chris
VK3QB vk3qb(@) hotmail.com



Dits n Dahs

By Chris VK3QB

There is a lot going on in the world of Morse Code here in VK, ZL and Oceania.

Let's not forget the WIA/IARU Region 3 program to review the 40 metre Band Plan. This initially controversial review was finalised and taken to the IARU Region 3 Conference last November.

As we hadn't heard any news I wrote to the IARU Region 3 Secretary asking for an update. Ken Yamaoto JA1CJP (IARU R3 Secretary) responded:

"we discussed the band plan at General Conference in Bangkok, last November. However, no immediate result was achieved and IARU Region 3 HF Band Plan Committee will carry on study and discussions.

Main issue on 40 m band plan is de-fact weak signal mode segment in the midst of phone segment. Last term (2021-2024), R3 HFBPC couldn't gather participation in discussion from Member Societies and couldn't reach any conclusion on 40 m.

So, it was agreed at the Conference to re-activate the R3 HFBPC and I'm trying find out suitable representatives from Member Societies to discuss Band Plan issues."

So for now at least it's business as usual. I'll keep readers informed of progress. If you've forgotten this program, check [this link](#) to learn more.

FISTS Down Under QSO Party Award

It's not too late to join in on the Friday evening QSO Parties. Starting at 0800 for three hours the aim is to have relaxed QSOs, not just with locals, but anyone. However, it's a great opportunity for VK and ZL operators to catch up with each other and improve their skills. You can read more about the Award [HERE](#).

Feature Keys: Bunnell
Triumph 1906-1918 from
Andy VK3OU

With thanks to Andy VK3OU - who used this key in the FDU QSO Party on 24th January... and he did a lovely job of sending the code too.



Feature Keys: Simplex Bug from Phil VK3VB



Thanks for sharing these photos Phil - very nicely paired with a vintage FT-200 Phil has been busy restoring. He tells us it's a labour of love. ;-)

Monthly VK/ZL Morse Zoom Sessions

Are you new to the code? Maybe you're working on developing your skills, or coming back and picking up a lost skill? Or maybe you just love the code and would like to join in.

I am convening a monthly Zoom session for Morse Code operators with support from CW Ops and RASA. The next session is on the 17th February at 0830Z. Read more about this initiative here:

<https://morsecodesessions.wordpress.com/about/>

If you have any questions or suggestions please drop me an email. vk3qb(@)hotmail.com

CW Ops CW Test every Thursday (VK/ZL time)

If you're keen and want to really polish those receiving skills try listening in on CW Ops CW Tests. The CW segments of the band really light up for these sessions; the exchanges are simple; your name and member number. If you're not a member just use "VK" instead.

Make no mistake though, some ops rocket along well in excess of 30 WPM and it's not uncommon for participants to report well over 100 QSOs in the hour. Don't feel you have to dive in; but spending time tuning in is a great way to develop head copy and QRQ. It's actually a lot of fun. Some of the bigger US stations park on a frequency and run. This means you can listen in on them for quite a while to confirm their callsign, name and number.

Learn more here: <https://cwops.org/cwops-tests/>

If you give CW Tests a try, even as a SWL, please tell us about your experience. Every Wednesday at 1300 – 1400z and 1900 – 2000z, and every Thursday at 0300 – 0400z and 0700 – 0800z.

Fists Down Under Leagues Table

For those of you interested in morse code and chasing DX, here is the FDU Leagues table from ClubLog. Graeme VK5GG is off to a great start, opening up a healthy margin from Andy VK3OU.... It's worth pointing out Graeme's station is an IC-7300 barefoot into a DX-Commander with 32 radials

DXCC League for FISTS CW Club

FISTS Chapter: Down Under Date Filter: 2025 Downloaded 04 February 2025 Export All

Rank	Callsign	Slots	160m	80m	60m	40m	30m	20m	17m	15m	12m	10m	6m	4m	2m	70cm	23cm	13cm
1	VK5GG	150		1		29		45	16	34	15	10						
2	VK3OU	125		1		19	20	21	20	22	10	11	1					
3	VK2COS	62				6	5	28	4	6	6	6	1					
4	ZL4TE	52				9	5	9	7	17	4	1						
5	VK3HJ	30	2			1	2	9	4	3	4	4			1			
6	VK3VB	20	1	1		3	2	8	2	3								
7	VK3NOP	17		1		5		10		1								
8	VK3QB	13	1	1		4	1	5		1								
9	ZL2AIM	9				3			1			5						
10	VK4DRK	3						3										
11	VK1AAF	2				2												



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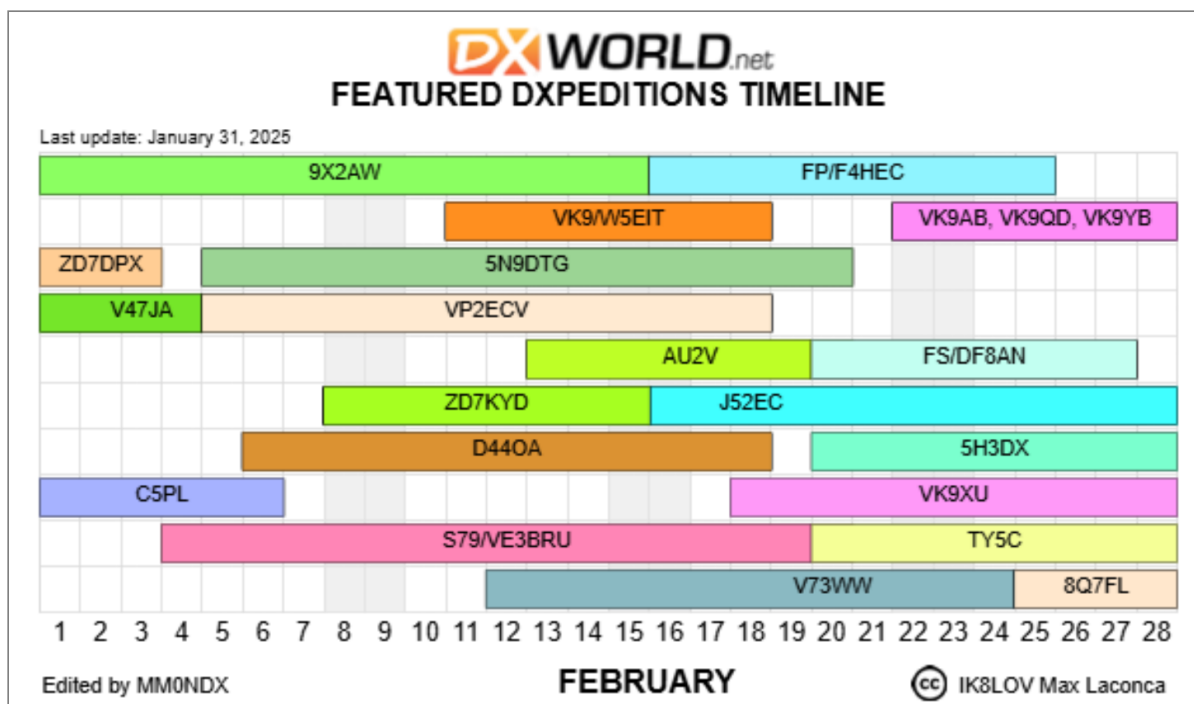
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DX Happenings

We start with the usual monthly report from DX-World. Click the image for more info.



Col from DX-World has also put together a nice summary of DX-editions in 2024.

Considering the past 12 months has seen DXpedition after DXpedition, it's no coincidence that 2024 has probably been the busiest year ever on DX-World.

Click [HERE](#) to read.

VK9CU and VK9XU

Two DXpedition are coming up and many of us will be keen to get them in the log. A team comprising four Germans and three Australians will activate these islands in late February and March 2025.

The team includes two local DXers, Alan VK6CQ and Steve VK6SJ. Zeljko VK6DX will be a guest operator on Christmas Island.

We wish the team the very best of luck and favourable propagation. (and don't forget us on the east coast!).

<https://vk9-2025.topdx.de/#welcome>



KC4/KB1EHE & KC4/KB1IFZ in action.

DX-World reports from this duo and their recent trip to Antarctica. Eric and Elsie share their story with some great photos and a video. Read more by following [this link](#).

Andaman Island - VU4AX

DX-Adventure is thrilled to announce our upcoming DX-pedition to the beautiful South Andaman Islands (IOTA AS-001).

From March 10th to March 20th, 2025, an experienced team of 12 operators will be active from South Andaman, operating 6 stations around the clock on bands from 10m to 160m (incl. WARC + 60m), using CW, SSB, and DIGI.



Months of careful planning and preparation have brought together an international team of experienced DX-peditioners, including:

ON4AMX, Marc; ON4HIL, Patrick; ON5UR, Max; ON5RA, Pascal; ON5TN, Karel; ON6CC, Marc; ON7FT, Jonas; ON7USB, Geert; ON7RU, Franky; ON8AZ, Francis; PA3EWP, Ronald; and PA9M, Marcel.

Six stations mean a lot of material and it is a big challenge to transport it all to VU4. With 1.150kg of equipment meticulously prepared, we will try to offer the best experience possible for you, covering 24/7 operations to maximize the change on having a QSO with us. VU4 ranks as #28 for the USA and #53 worldwide, making it a rare and exciting challenge

Needless to say, your support is essential to make this DX-pedition a success. We deeply appreciate our sponsors and suppliers for their ongoing support and welcome further contributions to help us achieve a memorable DX-pedition.

We understand the importance of providing opportunities for USA operators and will closely monitor propagation conditions to maximize the chances of QSOs with stations across the United States. While we cannot make any promises, we assure you that we will do our best to optimize operations and increase the chances of QSOs with USA operators.

To ensure maximum efficiency during this DXpedition, the team is supported by three experienced Pilot Stations: W2IRT Peter J. Dougherty - E21EIC Champ - ON9CFG Björn. If you can hear VU4AX signals while they are operating in another region, through long path, or under unusual conditions, please notify your regional

pilot. Your input will help them gather and analyse vital information which will then be relayed to the team.

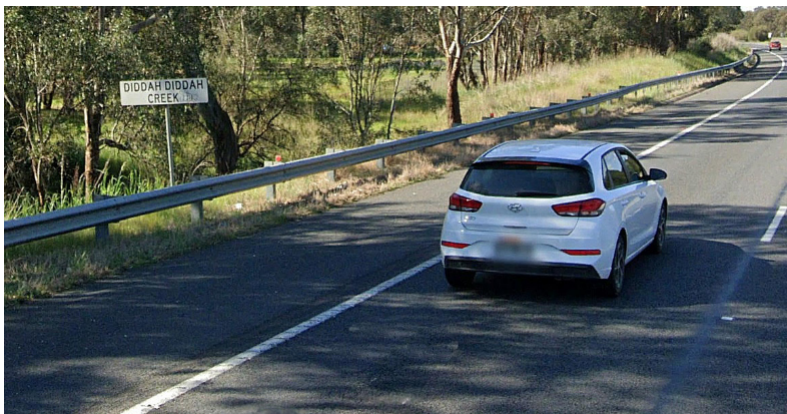
For contact details of the Pilot Stations, please visit the [DX-Adventure website](https://www.dx-adventure.com/).

Stay updated with the latest news at <https://www.dx-adventure.com/>

(Ref: The Daily DX 4 Feb 2025)

Morse Creek?

Many who have travelled in Victoria on the Hume Highway would have crossed a creek North of Wangaratta and seen the sign Diddah Diddah Creek, which sounds very much like the letters 'AA' in Morse Code. it raises the question, does this creek have a connection with CW? Did a truck carrying AA batteries crash? The top photo was taken in 1978 while travelling on the old Hume Highway, before the road was bypassed.



Today there is a new sign that faces the Hume Freeway, as seen from a current Google Earth Street View image:

The Truth?

The real answer is that this creek has nothing to do with Morse Code

Diddah Diddah Creek is an aboriginal name applied to the junction of the the Ovens and King rivers close to this location, originally pronounced close to Cor ram be yan did der.



VK Prefixes - Confirmation

There has been some confusion from some quarters regarding the changes to callsign prefix as a part of the Class Licence.

To clarify, the new arrangements are:

VK1-VK8 - Mainland Australia and Tasmania, as well as islands within 350km of the mainland

VK0 - Australian Antarctic Territory

VK9 - External Territories including:

Heard & McDonalds Islands

Norfolk Island

Mellish Reef

Willis Island & Islets

Cocos (Keeling) Islands

Christmas Island

Ashmore & Cartier Islands (although these are not an independent DXCC, they are part of VK)

For clarity the following apply:

Macquarie is VK7 - still it's own DXCC entity

Lord Howe Island in VK2 - still it's own DXCC entity

Macquarie Island is listed as the Macquarie Island Nature Reserve under the Tasmanian Nature Conservation Act 2002. Therefore Macquarie Island call signs issued under the Radiocommunications (Amateur Stations) Class Licence 2023 will be VK7.

The above were confirmed with ACMA December 2024

Hamfest 2025

Saturday 1st March
10am to 2pm at the
Mooroolbark Community
Centre
125 Brice Ave, Mooroolbark
VIC 3138
Entry \$10.00
(cash only event)



Open to traders from 8.00am. Call in on the Yarra Valley Repeater VK3RYV:
146.725Mhz -.6 offset, 123Hz tone or Wires-X: 'Auslink-VIC #07566'
Ample parking available. 4 minutes-walk from the train station.

Table Hire \$20.00. Free tea and coffee provided.
For table bookings and further information contact Steve
VK3NG mob: 0418103487 or email dmo@yvarq.org.au
<https://www.qrz.com/db/VK3YVG>

Peel Amateur Radio Group

PARGFEST Swap-Meet

Saturday 15th February 2025

Mandurah Bowling Club
89 Allnutt Street, Mandurah WA.

Doors Open:

0800 – Exhibitors & Sellers

0900 – 1230 Buyers

Entry Fee - \$5.00 per person

See you there amongst the raffles and bargains

Please check www.parg.org.au/whatsnew for last-minute updates.

Call-in to VK6ARG in PARG1 – AllStar & 146.850Mhz with 91.5Hz sub-tone

For more information call Peter 0432718026 or email parg.secretary@gmail.com



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Even better
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year!

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Radio room clock

As a result of the Titanic disaster, the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (“SOLAS Convention”) required ships at sea to maintain a receiver watch on the international marine distress frequency of 500 kHz for distress (SOS) signals.

The convention also mandated what were known as “silence periods” when all communications on 500 kHz must stop to allow any weak distress signals to be heard. 500 kHz silence periods ran from 15 to 18 and 45 to 48 minutes past each hour.

Radiotelephone silence periods were later introduced for the voice distress channel of 2182 kHz – these ran from the top of the hour to 3 minutes past and from 30 to 33 minutes past the hour.

Most cargo ships only carried one Radio Officer. When he/she was off watch, an “auto alarm receiver” was used to monitor 500 kHz. Ships in distress sent an “auto alarm

signal” before their SOS message on 500 kHz.

The auto alarm signal comprised twelve four second dashes, each separated by one second.

Auto alarm receivers in range responded to the signal by ringing bells in the Radio Officer’s cabin and the bridge.

The picture below shows a radio room clock from a merchant ship. The 500 kHz silence periods (15-18 and 45-48) are marked in red and the 2182 periods (00-03 and 30-33) are marked in green.

The dashes for generating the auto alarm signal are also marked on the periphery – 4 seconds on, 1 second off.

Morse code, silence periods and auto alarm dashes were phased out with the introduction of the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) in 1999.





Foundation Level Study Guide

V2 October 2024



Your Gateway to the World of Amateur Radio

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A Free Amateur Radio Learning Resource

This multimedia learning resource has been developed by RASA and is provided free of charge.



Like all our resources, the FLSG is free, and we encourage you to share it with your club, friends and others who may be interested in becoming a radio amateur.

You can download your own free copy of the study guide [HERE](#)

Vanuatu Earthquake Disaster and Amateur Radio

Everyone can recall the devastating news from our South Pacific neighbours just prior to Christmas, where on 17th December 2024, a magnitude-7.3 earthquake struck Vanuatu.

Read the news reports [HERE](#)

The quake has killed at least 17 people, injured many more, and caused incredible damage to the capital, Port Vila and its infrastructure. Australia's defence force and Foreign Aid kicked into action and were able to provide some immediate assistance.

Image courtesy ABC



Closer to our sphere of influence, an on-air exchange on amateur radio took place enabling an Air Vanuatu pilot located on the island of Efate to get a welfare message to his daughter in Brisbane. Abe, VK3ABE heard YJ8CW calling "Mayday" and responded to his call. Below is the heart warming story as reported by The Border Mail in Wodonga, Victoria.

However, this story highlights an important issue: the matter of emergency safety of life traffic as opposed to personal welfare traffic. Internationally agreed radio regulations provide clear guidance on the use of "Mayday" and "Pan Pan" procedures. Locally, we can refer to ACMA policy [HERE](#)

These protocols are in place for good reason and it's important we are all familiar with them. In this day and age, it's highly unlikely many of us will ever need to respond to a Mayday or Pan Pan call, but we should be prepared. Make sure you have a pad and pen by your station at all times, and it's most likely all of us have a mobile phone. Keep the above link to ACMA Distress and Safety Procedures on your browser's favourites list (it includes important phone numbers). Stay calm and take down all information from the caller, with a focus on their location, and a clear description of the emergency. Maintain contact until your assistance is no longer required.

Nonetheless, this news item is a positive story for our hobby and demonstrates that amateur radio can still play a role in emergency and welfare traffic handling. It would be great to see more general interest stories in local (and national) newspapers about our hobby.

Article from the newspaper

'It's a great thing': radio hams help get father's message home after Vanuatu quake

By Beau Greenway

A group of Border and North East amateur radio operators has helped ensure a message reached Australia after a devastating earthquake in Vanuatu.

Wodonga man Steven Wilson, call sign VK3SMW, was hosting a weekly net, a regularly scheduled gathering on the radio by amateur radio operators, on Tuesday night, December 17, when those tuned in could hear a faint "mayday, mayday, mayday" call.



Operators stopped what they were doing to listen closely and confirmed it was a distress signal. A fellow ham, Abe Wilson, based at Traralgon, in Victoria's Gippsland region, was able to contact the

man about 7.45pm. He was attempting to get a message from Vanuatu's capital, Port Vila, to his family in Brisbane.

The 7.2-magnitude earthquake has killed 14 people and injured more than 200.

Abe spoke to Colin Joli, an Air Vanuatu pilot who had survived the earthquake, and passed on his stepdaughter's phone number in Brisbane to Abe so he could let her know he was safe. After the phone call, at about 8.15pm, he reconnected with Mr Joli in Port Vila to confirm the message had been received. "I wasn't quite sure I was hearing it right, but we all went quiet, and we could hear it, and we tried to get his call sign. He was calling out for help because of the earthquake in Vanuatu," Steven said.

"It's the first time I've ever come across that as an amateur radio operator.

"This is why, during natural disasters, they rely on us guys. We're self-sufficient, so we can get messages through. It's a great thing.

"I think we all did a good job.

"It's devastating what happened in Vanuatu. We wish them all well."

Emotional connection

Abe, who uses the call sign VK3ABE, has been an amateur radio operator for nearly 30 years and said it was the first time he had answered a mayday contact.

"Nobody else could get back to him, so I transmitted and asked him to move frequency, and I got him on another frequency," Abe said.

"He came back to me in very good, plain English and said he had no other communications, and he gave me his stepdaughter's telephone number in Brisbane.

"She answered the phone and was a bit shocked, wondering who I was. I passed on the information that I had been talking to her stepfather via the radio.

"Both of us got very emotional because she had been trying to contact authorities with no result, and her stepfather was trying to get messages to her. "She was absolutely over the moon to hear the good news. "Once I finished with her, I went back to the radio and talked to the gentleman in Vanuatu. I told him I'd made the contact, and he was over the moon. "It was all done via amateur radio. There were no computers or internet, just radio frequency signals." Abe said operators expected more mayday calls on Wednesday night, December 18.

'A great community'

Steven is on the committee of the North East Victoria Amateur Radio Club.

The group has 40 members and holds monthly meetings to promote the hobby.

"It's a great community, and everyone helps everyone out. If you don't know something, ask a question, and I'm sure there's someone who has a bit more knowledge and can put you on the right path," he said.

"I've been into radio since I was young. My dad had an old valve receiver in the shed and we used to play around with that.

"I met a gentleman who was an amateur radio operator when I was 12 or 13, and I was amazed by all the equipment he had and all the exotic stations I was listening to.

"I got into CB radio when it was booming and was out of it for a long time, but then I got into amateur radio, and it was the best thing I've done."

Endless possibilities

Steven admitted it's an expensive hobby, and he'd "hate to know" how much he has spent on installing antennas and equipment to operate on the airwaves.

"I have a directional antenna on a tower, and I use a rotator to turn it where I want to. I can talk to people all around the world," he said.

"You've got to be licensed and sit an exam. It's all governed by the Australian Communications Media Authority.

"You're allocated frequencies you're allowed to operate on through the radio spectrum.

"It's a good hobby to be in, and I've met many folks. It's amazing to be able to communicate with the world.

"You can talk to a space shuttle when they do a fly-over. It's only brief, but it is possible." Steven said he had contacted operators in 118 countries, as well as Antarctica.

For more information about North East Victoria Amateur Radio Club, visit nevarc.org.au.

Ref: <https://www.bordermail.com.au/story/8851116/amateur-radio-heroes-connect-families-post-vanuatu-quake/>

For completeness, we acknowledge that Abe VK3ABE reports that the NE Amateur Radio club had no direct involvement in this QSO.



The RASA Welcome to Amateur Radio Guidebook provides an introduction to our hobby for new Foundation class amateurs.

The book is published digitally. It contains many hotlinks to external websites with useful information.

It is available as an Acrobat pdf file suitable for reading on a PC or tablet. It can be printed if required.

The Guidebook is [HERE](#)